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Minnesota Stereotypes about Minorities Match Nation*

Summary of Results

Minnesotans hold racial stereotypes as deep as those of the rest of the country, according to a new survey conducted by the University of Minnesota. Minnesotans, like their counterparts across the country, think members of most minority groups are lazier and more prone to violence than Whites. With a few exceptions these views are uniformly held across the state: they do not differ by demographic group or location.

The good news is that Minnesotans rated all minority groups better than average in both their strong work ethic and their low tendency toward violence. Similar national surveys have given lower ratings to communities of color. Perhaps this means that Minnesota employers and others may be more willing than their national counterparts to give minorities the opportunities they need to succeed.

On a seven-point scale, where 4 is middling and higher scores are more desirable, Minnesotans gave all groups an average score above four. Just as Garrison Keillor tells us, all groups were rated "above average," but more like George Orwell, Whites were viewed as more above average than others.

Eight hundred adults took part in the survey conducted by the University's Minnesota Center for Survey Research. First they were asked about the work ethic of Whites, Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, and Indians. Except for Asians, all groups rated significantly lower than Whites.

The survey had replicated a national survey conducted by NORC (National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago) which used a seven point scale where 1 meant most people in that group were lazy, 7 meant most people were hard working, and a 4 meant people were not toward one end or the other. All racial/ethnic groups were rated higher in Minnesota than they were in the national survey. Where comparable data exist, the gap between ratings for Whites and other groups was as great in Minnesota as in national surveys, sometimes greater.

The survey also asked about each racial/ethnic group's tendency toward violence. All racial groups were seen as significantly more prone to violence than Whites. The score for Blacks on this measure was slightly below 4; that is, perception is that more Blacks tend toward violence. As with the question about work ethic, Minnesotans rated all groups more positively than did the nation, but the gap between Whites and others was comparable to the national gap. On this issue, comparisons with national data are harder to justify because that data is six years old and there is reason to believe that national opinion is shifting.

Minnesota is a state new to diversity and may be carrying stereotypes learned from other parts of the country. In 1980 only 3.9 percent of the state's population were people of color; the number grew to 6.3 percent by 1990 – still a fairly small proportion of the state. Some 93.2 percent of the people answering this survey were White. The number of non-White respondents was so small that no effort was made to remove them from the analysis.

There are some encouraging notes in the survey. Most groups scored better than average on both measures. The most popular (modal) response for all groups was "4," neither good nor bad. A significant number of people refused to answer these questions, varying from 27 to 44 people depending on the question and another 18 to 37 insisted they did not know enough to answer questions about the minority groups. Below is a sample of the comments given by these people:

"These questions are awful and unfair"

"I don't want to generalize"

"It's an individual issue, not race"

"I haven't worked with them"

"My answers are the same across the board"

"Who makes up these damn questions?"

"Color has no effect"

"I've never had any contact with these people, so I couldn't say"

Detailed Results

Survey results can be presented as a response distribution for each of the five racial/ethnic groups, but they are best summarized as an average score for each group. On the question of work ethic, Whites were given higher average scores than every group except Asian American, which had a comparable score. See Table 1 and Figure 1. Hispanics and

Blacks scored lower than Whites. American Indians received the lowest average score, a full point lower than Whites. (A summary of these gaps in average score can be seen in Table 5.)

TABLE 1:
Response Distribution to Questions about Group's Work Ethic

score	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Indian
Lazy 1	1.2%	2.6%	1.4%	1.6%	2.7%
2	0.4	3.2	1.4	3.0	7.4
3	2.1	11.5	5.0	10.2	15.3
4	33.7	44.8	30.3	43.9	45.9
5	27.8	22.7	23.5	26.2	17.9
6	24.3	10.9	25.5	10.4	7.4
Hard Working 7	10.6	4.3	13.0	4.6	3.4
Average Score	5.05	4.32*	5.02	4.40*	4.05*

* significantly different from White at 0.05 level

Most groups are seen as lazier than Whites and those differences are statistically significant. Such a view can unfairly affect people of color looking for work or even shopping in local stores. A recent study by the Wilder Foundation, *Minnesota Latino Resources and Needs Assessment*, found Hispanics did face such discrimination despite the report's finding that they are "hardworking people laboring at physically-demanding, often undesirable jobs for low pay."

In the second question, respondents were asked to use the same scale to score each group in its tendency toward violence. As before high scores are better, so a low score means a higher tendency toward violence. Results are presented in Table 2 and Figure 2.

TABLE 2:
Response Distribution to Questions about Group's Tendency Toward Violence

score	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Indian
Prone to Violence 1	1.5%	3.8%	2.5%	1.7%	1.9%
2	1.9	9.5	3.5	6.0	4.3
3	7.4	24.0	11.0	18.2	12.3
4	41.3	43.0	49.6	48.1	48.1
5	25.6	13.4	19.1	17.8	20.7
6	16.9	5.1	11.0	6.0	9.4
Not Prone 7	5.4	1.2	3.3	2.4	3.4
Average Score	4.58	3.73*	4.25*	4.02*	4.23*

* significantly different from White at 0.05 level

On this issue, Whites were given significantly higher scores than *all* other groups, including Asian Americans. Asian Americans and American Indians were rated somewhat below Whites on this scale. Hispanics scored lower yet. Blacks were given the lowest,

Figure 1. Lazy vs Hard Working

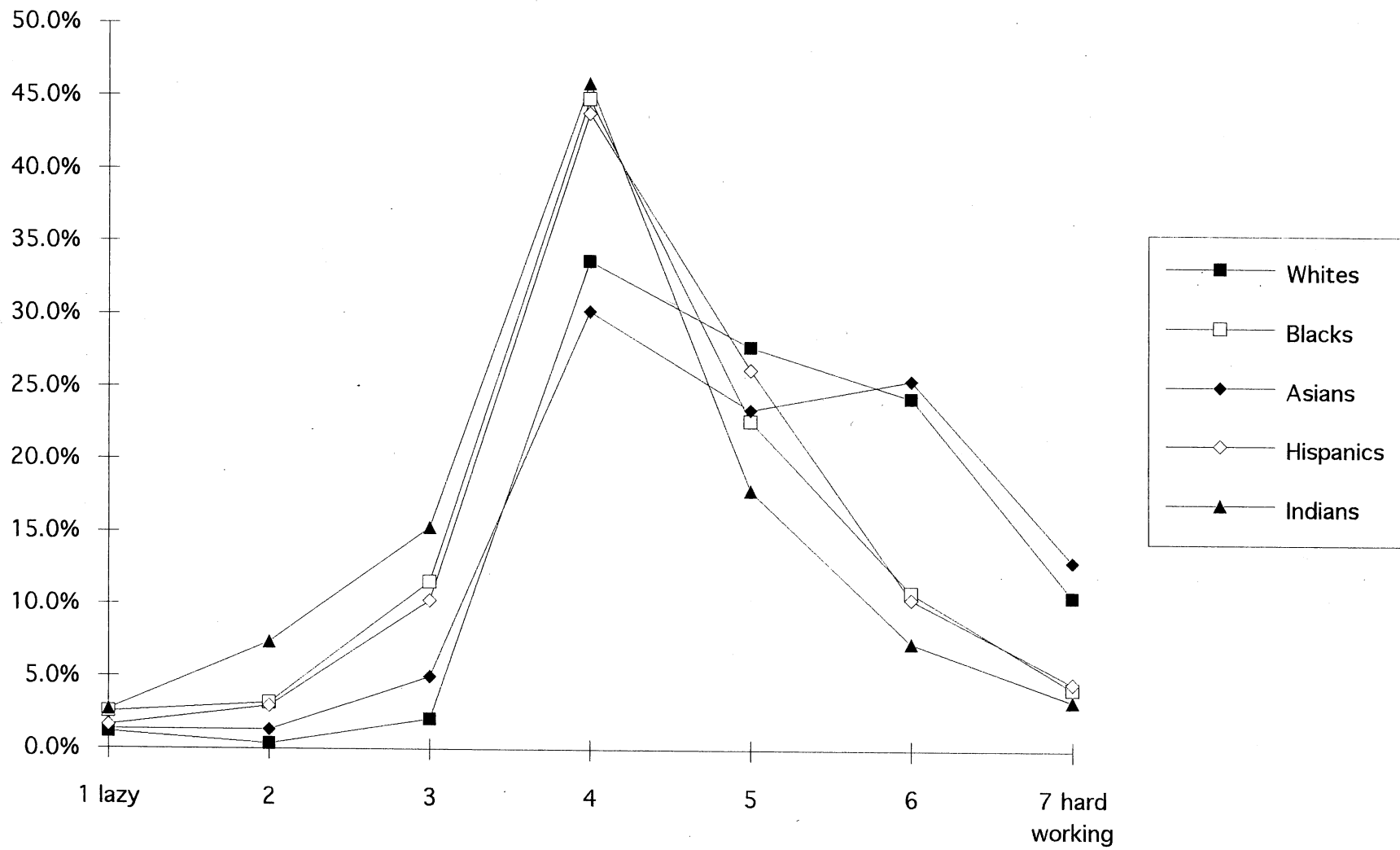
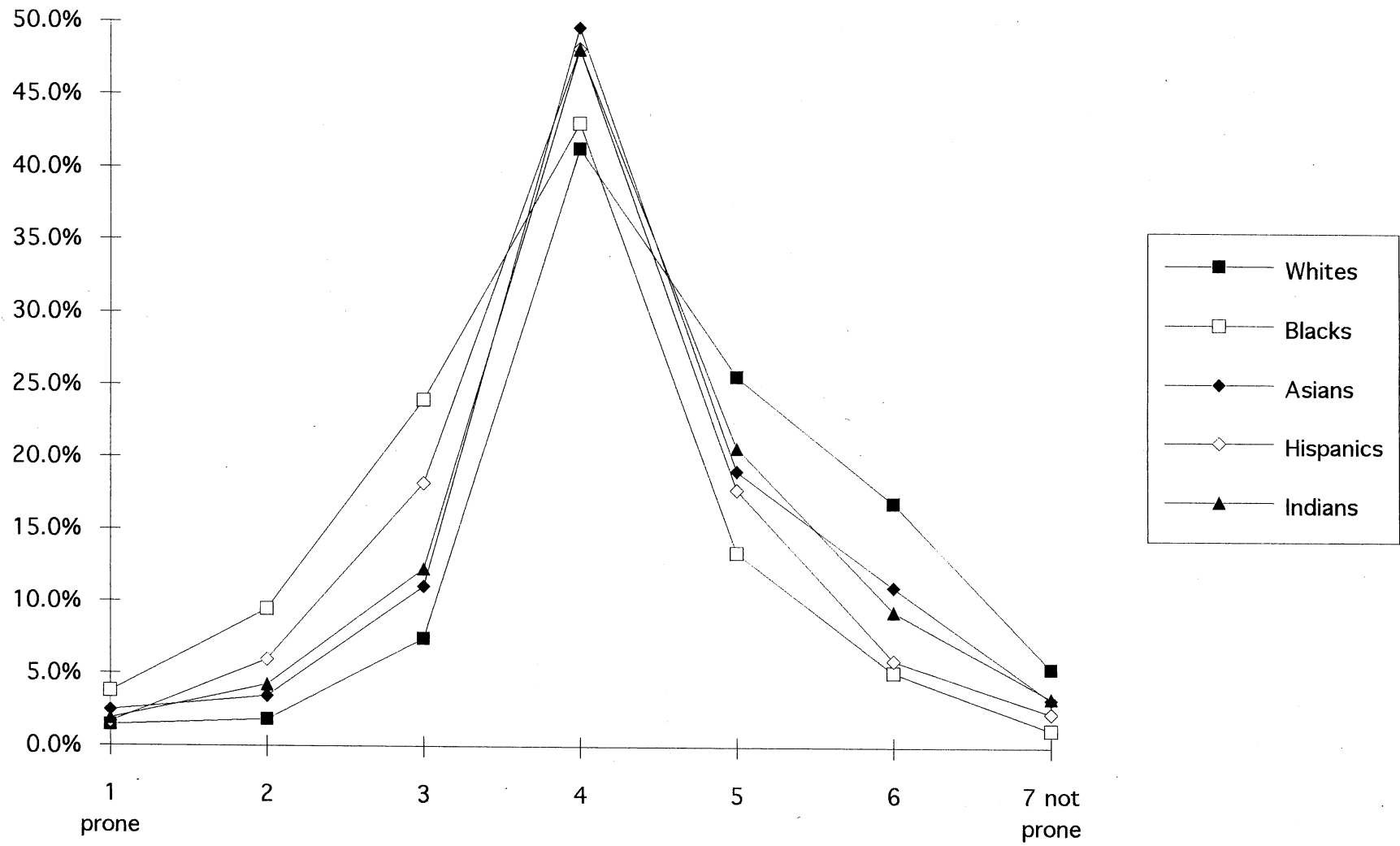


Figure 2. How Prone to Violence



most negative rating. This is the only case where more Minnesota respondents rated a group below the average score of "4; this view may stem from recent rises in visible crime, even though a very small number of people are involved.

Comparison with National Surveys

The questions asked were identical to those asked on the General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago. This provides us with an opportunity to compare Minnesota's views about people of color with those of the nation.

Work Ethic. NORC has asked the question about work ethic in 1990, 1994, and 1996. It asked this question about most of the same racial groups, but did not ask about American Indians. In 1996, respondents were asked only to rate Whites and Blacks. The 1996 sample size was somewhat larger than our Minnesota survey.

In 1996, Minnesotans had a higher opinion of the work ethic of both White and Black populations than did the nation as a whole (see Table 3 and Figure 3). Minnesotans scored Whites 0.63 higher than the nation on average and Blacks 0.54 higher. But Minnesotans actually saw a wider gap between the two races than national respondents, -0.73 for Minnesota and -0.63 for the nation.

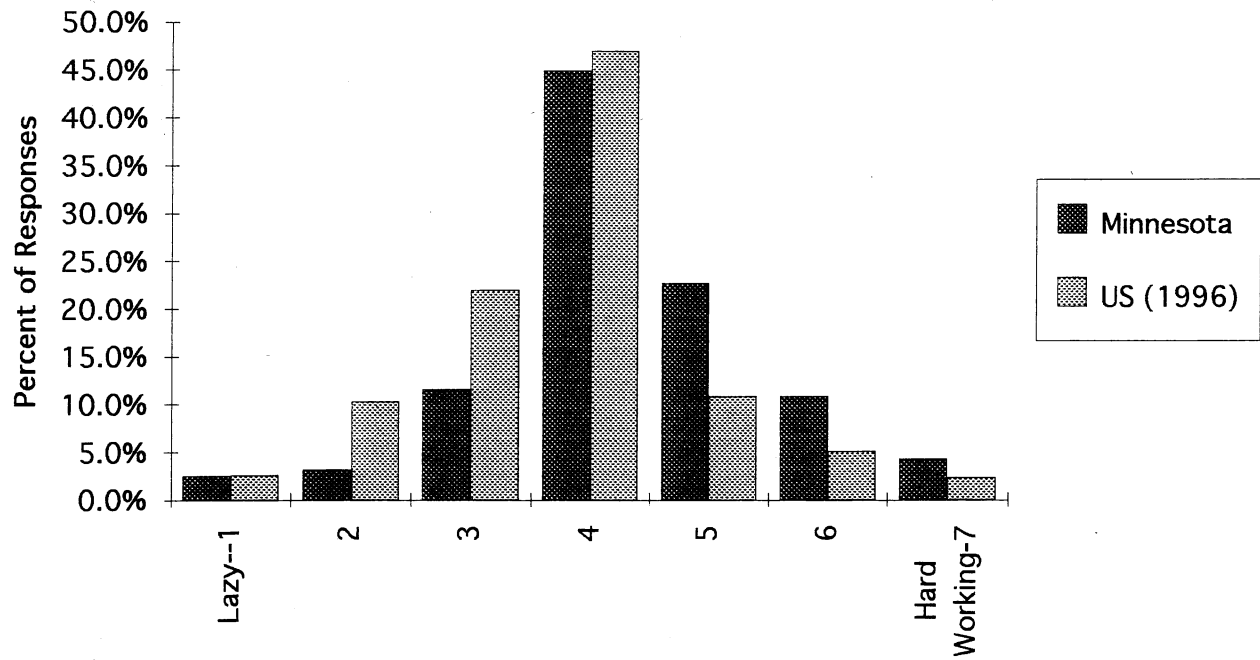
TABLE 3
Average Score on Work Ethic (lower scores are more lazy)

	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Indian
Minnesota, 1996 (N=800)	5.05	4.32	5.02	4.40	4.05
United States					
1990 (N=1372)	4.85	3.64	4.67	3.86	--
1994 (N=1472)	4.75	3.69	4.90	3.92	--
1996 (N=978)	4.41	3.78	--	--	--

A higher percentage of national respondents were non-whites and NORC analyses have shown that each racial/ethnic group tends to rate itself better than it is rated by others, so one should expect that some of the smaller national gap between Whites and others can be explained by differences in the compositions of the respective samples.

National opinions have been changing, so it is hard to know how best to compare White scores to other races. NORC did not ask about Asians or Hispanics after 1994. White scores have been dropping over the decade while the scores of other groups have been rising – both moving toward the average score of 4.0. As a result, the gap between the

Figure 3. Score on Blacks' Work Ethic



scores has been shrinking: from -1.21 to -0.63 for Blacks compared to Whites. In 1994, Asians actually outscored Whites on average. And the Hispanic gap had shrunk from -0.99 in 1990 to -0.83 in 1994. Extrapolating these trends would have the nation scoring Asians much better than Minnesota, while both the nation and Minnesota score Hispanics about the same.

Tendency Toward Violence. National opinions on tendency toward violence are available only for 1990. There is no 1996 national data for comparison. The radical changes in views about the work ethic of the various races over this decade make us leery of comparing Minnesota data to this relatively old data, but it is all we have. In general, Minnesota views every racial group as less prone to violence than does the nation as a whole. Whites score highest and Blacks score lowest among the races according to both national and Minnesota views (see Table 4 and Figure 4). The gap in average score for Blacks and Hispanic as compared to Whites is lower in 1996 for Minnesota than it was in 1990 for the nation as a whole, but the gap is greater for Asians.

TABLE 4
Average Score on Tendency to Violence (lower scores are more prone)

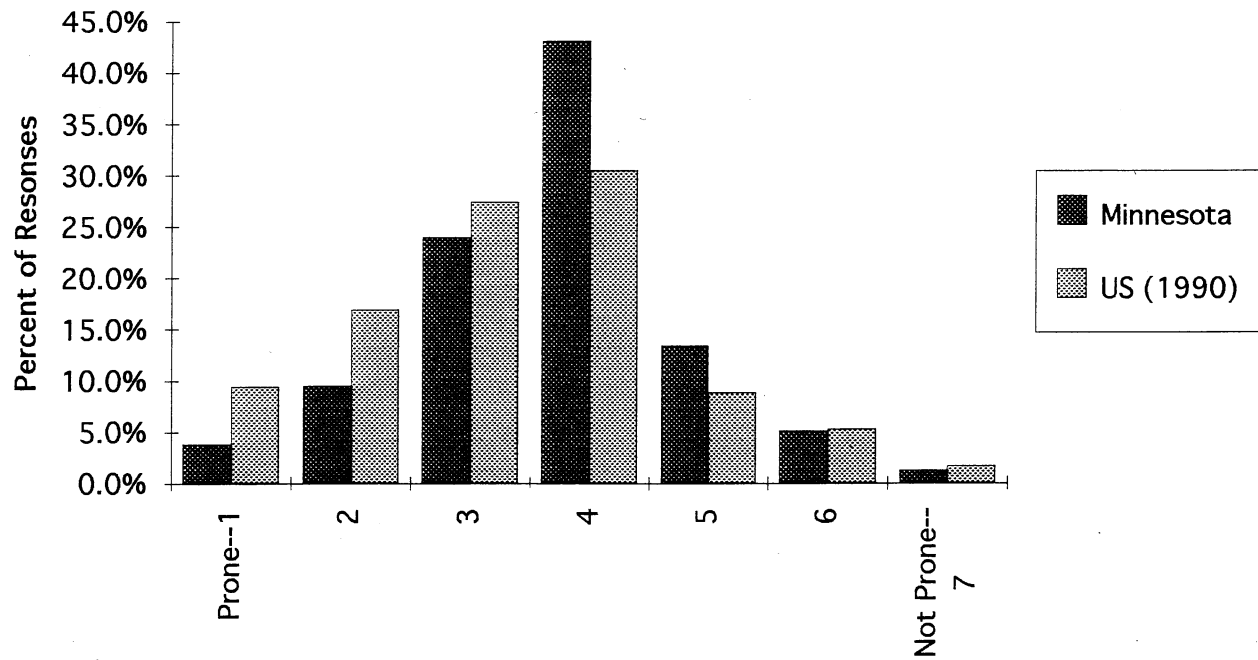
	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Indian
Minnesota, 1996 (N=800)	4.58	3.73	4.25	4.02	4.23
United States 1990 (N=1372)	4.37	3.35	4.25	3.60	--

To summarize, Minnesotans view minorities more favorably than does the nation, but the gap in scores compared to Whites is about the same. Regarding work ethic, the Minnesota perception gap is slightly larger than that of the nation for Blacks and Asians. For Hispanics, the state and the nation appear to have a similar gap. It is difficult to estimate the relative gaps in perception toward violence because the national data is six years older. In all cases the 1996 Minnesota gaps are only about 0.2 smaller than the 1990 U.S. data and national gaps on work ethic have been narrowing during the decade, so it possible that the state and national gaps on tendency toward violence are now equivalent. There is no national data about these issues for American Indians.

Not Much Difference Across Minnesota

How do different subgroups of Minnesotans view these issues? Are there differences in how they compare various minority groups to Whites? To address these questions we discard the approach of looking at average scores and look at the difference between scores given to Whites and those given to the particular racial/ethnic group. This calculation is

Figure 4. Score on Blacks' Tendency to Violence



made for each survey respondent. An average of these calculations gives a measure of the *gap* facing each group. Negative scores indicate that a group is perceived to have a lower rating than Whites and the larger that number the wider the gap. A summary for all respondents is presented in Table 5. This approach yields roughly the same result as was seen when comparing the average scores in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 5: The Gap:
Difference in Average Group Score Compared to White Average Score

	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Indian
Work Ethic	-.73	-.03	-.65	-1.00
Tendency to Violence	-.82	-.30	-.53	-.32

Work Ethic. Table 6 presents the gaps in work ethic given for seven demographic subgroups of the state's population. Nearly every subgroup scores every racial group below Whites, the exception being some views about Asians. What is surprising about this table is the small number of significant differences indicated. Of the 28 comparisons shown (seven demographic categories times four racial groups) only ten statistically significant differences are found. The negative views about people of color appear to be held fairly uniformly throughout the state's population.

TABLE 6:
The Gap in Work Ethic Average Scores Given by Subgroups Minnesotans

	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Indian
Gender		*	*	
Men	-.80	.11	-.55	-1.00
Women	-.66	-.17	-.75	-1.01
Age		*		*
18-54	-.57	.01	-.61	-.89
55-95	-1.18	-.15	-.77	-1.30
Education		*	*	
Up thru High School or more	-.76	-.18	-.72	-1.08
Technical or College Degree	-.65	.22	-.53	-.91
Marital Status				
Married	-.70	.03	-.60	-1.03
Not Married	-.73	-.11	-.71	-.98
Income				
Up to \$40,000	-.68	-.03	-.60	-.94
More than \$40,000	-.67	.09	-.60	-.98
Geographic Location			*	*
Outstate	-.74	-.11	-.75	-1.13
Twin Cities Metro	-.72	.04	-.56	-.88
Political Affiliation		*		*
Republican	-1.00	-.01	-.82	-1.32
Democrat	-.57	-.10	-.58	-.81
Independent	-.66	.04	-.58	-.97

* Significantly Different at 0.05 level.

Some different views about work ethic are apparent. The gap in women's scores for Blacks is narrower than for men, but wider for the other races; women's more negative views toward Asians and Hispanics are significantly different from the views of males as determined by a statistical analysis of variance test. The perception gap of older people toward Blacks and Indians is significantly wider than that of their younger counterparts. More educated people have more narrow gaps than less educated people in their perceptions of all minority groups and those differences are significant for Asians and Hispanics. People living outstate have significantly wider gaps in their views of the two populations with whom they have direct contact: Hispanics and Indians. Except for Asians, Republican views toward minority groups show the widest gaps while Democrats are the most narrow; these difference are statistically significant for Blacks and Indians.

Tendency Toward Violence. Table 7 shows perception gaps in rating tendency toward violence. Every subgroup finds minority populations more prone to violence than Whites; i.e., all gap scores are negative. Only 9 of 28 possible comparisons are statistically significant. Women have wider perception gaps than men, but this difference is statistically significant only in their view towards Asians. Older people show wider gaps than younger, and this difference is significant for Asians and Indians. More educated Minnesotans have narrower gaps in their views of all racial groups, but statistically narrower only for Asians and Indians. Outstate Minnesotans show significantly wider perception gaps for Blacks, Hispanics, and Indians than do people in the Metro area. Republicans show the widest perception gaps for all racial groups, but none are statistically significant.

TABLE 7:

The Gap in Tendency to Violence Average Scores Given by Subgroups Minnesotans

	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Indian
Gender		*		
Men	-.80	-.21	-.45	-.24
Women	-.84	-.39	-.60	-.40
Age		*		*
18-54	-.78	-.22	-.50	-.24
55-95	-.91	-.49	-.60	-.56
Education		*		*
Up thru High School or more	-.86	-.37	-.57	-.43
Technical or College Degree	-.78	-.18	-.46	-.19
Marital Status			*	
Married	-.80	-.25	-.44	-.31
Not Married	-.86	-.36	-.68	-.38
Income				
Up to \$40,000	-.83	-.26	-.48	-.38
More then \$40,000	-.76	-.22	-.49	-.25
Geographic Location	*		*	*
Outstate	-.93	-.37	-.69	-.54
Twin Cities Metro	-.71	-.24	-.37	-.13
Political Affiliation				
Republican	-.94	-.32	-.64	-.50
Democrat	-.75	-.27	-.38	-.21
Independent	-.82	-.25	-.55	-.30

* Significantly Different at 0.05 level.

Methodology

The survey was conducted from October 22 to December 21, 1996 by the Minnesota Center for Survey Research (MCSR) at the University of Minnesota. Some 800 adults were contacted using random digit dialing to reach the household and most-recent-birthday as a means to reach a random adult within the household. Up to six attempts were made to reach each phone number. The response rate was 65 percent. This is an acceptable rate, though lower than other MCSR surveys, with one reason thought to be respondent fatigue at being surveyed many times during this election season. Responses were weighted by the number of adults in the household to better represent all adults in the state. Surveys of this size typically have sampling errors of no more than ± 3.5 percentage points. In this measure, as in others used throughout this report, a 95 percent confidence level was used as the measure of statistical significance; i.e., in only 5 cases out of 100 might one expect to see such results because of chance.

The Questions

Two questions were asked in the survey. In each, respondents were asked to rate different groups in our society on a seven point scale. In each case, they were read a statement, then asked to score that population. The first question was about work ethic, the second about tendency toward violence.

Q1 In the first statement a score of 1 means that you think almost all of the people in the group are "lazy." A score of 7 means that almost all people of that group are "hard-working." A score of 4 means you think that the group is not towards one end or another, and of course you may choose any number in between that comes closest to where you think people in the group stand.

Q2 The second set of characteristics asks if people in the group tend to be violence prone or if they tend NOT to be violence prone. A score of 1 means they tend to be violence prone and a score of 7 means they tend NOT to be violence prone.

They were asked to score five racial and ethnic groups on this scale: Whites, Blacks, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and American Indians. Those questions asked, for example, "Where would you rate WHITES in general on this scale?"

* The impetus behind this research came from Al Kelly of Minneapolis who was interested in racial stereotypes in Minnesota and called our attention to NORC national surveys on this issue. Tom Smith of NORC was helpful in providing data from their surveys. The author is indebted to the following people who read earlier drafts of this report and whose questions and comments led to improvements: Thomas Scott (director of CURA), Richard Chin (reporter for *St. Paul Pioneer Press*), and Warren Wolfe (reporter for *Star Tribune*).